

AMATEUR CINE

W O R L D

Magazine

MARCH—MAY, 1945

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AMATEUR CINE WORLD is published quarterly
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GORDON S. MALTHOUSE, Editor

Public Performance

ALTHOUGH that ubiquitous war-time phenomenon, the queue, snakes its blind, implacable way round cinemas as regularly as it did of old, for many of us opportunities of cinema-going have been considerably restricted during these past few years.

For our part, the last time we saw a complete programme through was a year ago in a little country town in a cinema that had once been the Corn Exchange. The feature film, months old, had in more sophisticated localities aspired only to the dignity of supporting film; and the place of supporting film was taken by three shorts, an M.O.I. flash and a news reel, plus an astonishing selection of lantern slides advertising local businesses.

The shorts were oddly chosen. One was a colour traveltogue of some place in America—we forget where because the film could not keep our attention from wandering. Another showed the life of a G.I. in a camp in Ireland. And the third was a sentimental piece that could only have come out of America: its theme the need for loving kindness towards the young American recruit. Lying in a berth on a train that is taking him to a training camp, he recalls his schooldays and the events leading to his call-up, including the Christmas party, where his kid sister and he made heavy going of being hilarious in a vast room, with Pop and Mom looking benevolently on.

And—what d'you think?—he'd had his calling-up papers all the time and hadn't said a word about it. Then—here's a surprise for you—they fall out of his pocket, and then Pop and Mom know. Eventually, following rather too late the excellent example of most of the audience, he falls asleep, and the silver-haired old train attendant lovingly and reverently drapes the tumbled bedclothes about his shoulders.

Surprisingly enough, this film was directed by a young Englishman, Paul Burnford, well known in this country as an amateur some years ago. His film, "Moods of

Nature"—a scenic—won an I.A.C. award, and he has given good advice on filming scenery in the columns of A.C.W.

For an audience of Americans, a programme built up of such films of surely national interest is, doubtless, very suitable; and, basically, a programme consisting of one long film and several shorts is purely the ideal one, whatever the audience. In this particular case the result was unfortunate because the supporting shorts were not carefully chosen—if, indeed, choice had entered into it at all. They were slammed on the screen as fill-ups; and the "big" picture was so weak that it was past all support. But a good feature preceded by a few one- and two-reelers that strike the key and help to evoke the mood needed for its proper appreciation could represent the easily attainable ultimate in film exhibition.

To the amateur falls the opportunity of leading the way—if he will—to this desirable state of affairs. After the war there will be no lack of means for making films. There will be even better stock and apparatus and a far more widespread use of substandard than hitherto. So it is reasonable to suppose that within a few years of the closing of the war there will be a large number of amateur films ready for fitting into thoughtfully balanced programmes for public exhibition.

Every year, of course, there will be the A.C.W. "Ten Best" shows, but we should like to see similar shows available all over the country in every week of the year, since only by frequent exhibition of the results can the standard of amateur film making be continually and consistently improved. There are still many amateurs who have never seen a really good amateur film, and so work without the stimulus of example, unaware of how close the skilful producer can get to what the inexperienced think of as unattainable.

When the film societies function again in strength we hope that a great deal of attention will be paid to the exhibition side of their

Silent Film Technique

by GEORGE H. SEWELL, A.R.P.S.

A LITTLE while ago the Editor, under the title "The Paradox of the Silent Film," referred to two criticisms of amateur film productions which had appeared in the public press, and in his summing up said: "The silent film play is to the talking one as ballet is to the theatre . . . The silent film must not imitate; it must create within its own limits. We must have always in mind not that our films do not talk but that they do not have to talk, that the intrusion of the spoken word would shatter what should be an essay in a purely pictorial art."

For over a year now I have had a unique opportunity not only of seeing a very large body of amateur film making intended for certain and particular purposes, but also of analysing all this material in detail, and of attempting to cut it into usable film subjects. The film has been shot by amateur cinematographers of good standing, who have considerable advantages over the average amateur worker, in that they are working as part of an officially sponsored scheme, have generous supplies of film stock available, specific subjects to deal with and ample time in which to do the work. It is interesting, therefore, to sum up the shortcomings of these workers.

It is interesting because these workers are making documentaries, and the documentary film is supposed to be pre-eminently the field of the amateur because of restrictions in the way of built-up scenery, large studios, and so on. Nearly all the material I have handled has been of factual subjects, and shot out-of-doors.

The charge I level against all of them, without exception—and it is a charge which can be laid at the door of most amateurs—is that they don't think. (Yes, Sir. You who read this probably offend as badly as everybody else.)

Just as the ease with which masses of mediocre snapshots can be taken blinds people to the very creditable artistry of the best photography, so the ability to secure a lot of exposures which can be viewed on the screen without discomfort blinds amateur cinematographers to the fact that ability to do this does not even begin to qualify a person to make films.

I have been talking to and working with amateur cinematographers ever since the beginnings of 9.5mm. and 16mm., and it is my experience that practically never does

the amateur take the same care and trouble to do a given job as does the professional.

For example, a very large proportion of them are not even sure about the difference between a scenario and a script, and more often than not they attempt to start operations by writing a shooting script. Sometimes they even airily discard this.

Another trouble to which they are prone is to concentrate on the immediately spectacular without reference to its importance to the subject in hand. For example, a film on some out-of-doors occupation will be overloaded by an excessive footage devoted to beautiful scenery which, however pleasant, does not add one iota to the main story.

Again, they are superficial in their approach. They think that *any* long shot, *any* mid-shot, *any* close shot of the subject will make up a sequence. They are supremely unconscious of the mechanical need for matching movement to movement in such shots. They make no attempt to arrange the scenes, or to control the personnel. They do not realise, even though they are taking ordinary people doing their everyday job, that that job is done without any reference to the observer, and that they must co-ordinate the action and the shots for the benefit of the camera.

Frequently one sees infuriating shots on the screen where the careless placing of the camera causes significant action (whether it be of hands or of masses of people) to be obscure, where unwanted persons wander about in foreground or background, or where the angle of the lighting is so unsuitable that the subjects lose much of their significance. As an example of the latter, I saw last week some shots of an important ceremony taken in blinding sunshine with half the people in almost impenetrable shadow, and in the same film some dark-skinned people shot against the light so that their features lost all detail. In both cases the cameraman had every opportunity to have altered the conditions had he considered it necessary.

It all boils down to the same thing—they don't think. They are the very reverse of modest, because they airily suppose that by first intention and sheer inspiration they can do successfully what the trained professional sheds tears and blood to accomplish. They attempt too much. I am not one of those who suppose that the amateur should not make film *plays* (although I must confess that I passed through that phase). On the

contrary, I feel that if anybody has something he wants to say, whether it be in the form of drawing, writing, music, documentary films or film plays, let him try to say it. What I do ask, is that he observes the main tenet of the artist, the limitation of his medium. If he is sincere and earnest, and willing to put all his effort into it, his statement on a given theme may be every bit as significant as a statement on the same theme made by the professional with infinitely vaster material resources than he himself has. It is all a question of sincerity.

Because it is, to some extent, simpler than story film making, let us consider the approach to documentary filming. Many of the remarks will equally apply to the story film.

The approach can best be made in three stages. The first of these is the treatment. At this point the film maker tries to get his idea down on paper in ordinary story form. Literary ability matters only to the extent that it enables him to make perfectly clear to himself what it is he is trying to say. Considerations of actual settings and actors can be left out at this stage, except in a very broadest way, e.g., you cannot expect to attempt Ben Hur in a backyard unless you have a most brilliant effects merchant in your retinue.

If, for instance, he is embarking on a film about farming, the film maker should decide *exactly* what he wishes to tell his audience about farming. Is it to be a character study of farmers and their devotion to the soil, or of their brilliance and ingenuity, or of the multiplicity of tools they use, or of their difficulties, or how modern methods have altered the farming landscape, or of the impact of Landgirl labour on farming, or any number of other things? He may want to touch on several of these, but he must certainly not flounder among them in bewildered fashion. Many films do.

To prepare himself for this first work he will have studied some treatises on the subject, will preferably have talked with farmers and farm hands, and possibly have done some farm work himself. He will have searched for some points which will distinguish his own film from all other films on farming, something which he specially wants to say. In preparing his treatment he will also have to settle the question of what proportion of the whole is to be devoted to each statement he wants to make, and the relative importance of each section.

At an early stage he should determine these in terms of screen time, so that later on "I have only so many minutes for this" will act as a welcome check to unbalanced lavishness of footage, and will exercise his ingenuity in keeping within the time limits he has set

himself. The film will benefit from this in the end.

Having completed this stage, the film maker should then envisage actual places in which he can shoot. A few week-ends spent in visiting likely places, particularly if he takes a "still" camera with him, will give him a lot of fun and a lot of factual information. It will later enable him to plan his action to the actual settings, and thus to avoid building up sequences which cannot be shot when he gets to the job.

He should start to keep a notebook, and in it plot the plans of the various proposed settings, the times of day when he saw them and the light direction. He should make similar notes about the photographs he takes. It is easy to work out from such information the times of day when the lighting will be at the correct angle to secure the effects he wants.

Then comes preparation of the scenario. This is still in ordinary literary form, and breaks down the story into sections, indicates in some detail the places where various parts of the action take place, but does not attempt to specify individual shots. And for the first time the film as a whole begins to take recognisable shape.

It is written with a close eye to the notes in his notebook, the photographs he has taken, and his visual memory of the places and people he has seen. At this stage he may modify to some extent the proportion of screen time he will devote to each statement, but this should be altered as little as possible from his earlier decision, when he was looking at his subject as a broad whole.

If time and opportunity exist he can again visit the proposed scenes, and check his work to see that he has not introduced impossibilities.

Then comes the shooting script. For the first time he attempts to analyse his material into shots. Each piece of action is broken down into its components, and each component recorded as a separate shot. All the while the film maker must think of those shots as the audience will actually see them on the screen. He must bear in mind not only the angles from which he will approach his subject, but be sure that changes of camera angle will not introduce bewildering changes of apparent direction on the screen. He must build a nicely balanced mixture of long, mid and close shots, and decide the significant moments in which such changes of length shall take place.

If he is making a silent film he will introduce titles in their appropriate places, and if it is to be a sound film he can indicate in a parallel column the sounds and commentaries which will occur in juxtaposition to the pictures.

In both cases he must all the time think in pictures. When he puts "C.S. So-and-so" he must have in mind a particular close shot related accurately to what goes before it and what comes after.

He must avoid that deepest of all pitfalls, telling his story in words with the pictures merely to illustrate the words. The pictures must be adequate in themselves, the words complementary to them, and pictures and words must each do their part, saying each what it can best say, and not saying exactly the same as the other medium.

A simple example is of a man leading a horse out into a stable yard. The average amateur title would be "Willie leading out Dobbin." But the picture tells us that the horse is being led out, and the name of Willie has already been established in an earlier part of the film. Let the title, then, add to the general information, with some such statement as "Dobbin, the gentle shire, chief labourer on the farm." Thus we tell the audience his name, his breed, and give some idea of his importance in the scheme of things.

An excellent aid to pictorial planning, which has been mentioned before in A.C.W., is to make a small mask or stencil of film-frame shape and about 1½ inches wide, run round it with a pencil to make a frame opposite each shot reference on the script and sketch in (however roughly) the general layout of the principal parts of the scene.

At the end of this operation the film maker should have a vivid visual impression of the whole film as it will build up shot by shot on the screen.

Then will come the casting. If it is to be a factual film it will be cast from ordinary people doing their ordinary work. Great care must be taken in casting. Do not always choose the most attractive looking women, or the most striking men. Be sure that they move reasonably well—and this does not always mean the most gracefully so much as the most characteristically. But, beyond everything, try to find those persons who are most amenable to direction and who can carry out your requirements with some intelligence.

When you do the shooting keep very careful and copious notes. Record why you prefer some shots in a series of retakes, and any other relevant point which may arise. This will prove invaluable in the editing stage.

Of course, this is all a considerable amount of work, but it can be kept to a minimum by tackling a modest, short subject to start with, leaving longer subjects till later when your own capabilities have been expanded by practice and experience.

In any case, I am assuming that your aim is to make the best possible job of your film making, and all the foregoing is part of film making. If you have the right mental attitude to the job it will all be a joy to do, and your films are much more likely to be a joy to see at the end of your labours.

PUBLIC PERFORMANCE *(continued from page 185).*

work; and in this the Federation of Kinetograph Societies and the Institute of Amateur Cinematographers will play an important part, for there must be the organisation to discover and circulate amateur films produced both by individuals and groups.

There will be little difficulty in finding them. Our Reviews of Readers' Films, publication of which will be resumed at the earliest possible moment, will, as before, present a cross-section of amateur endeavour. But there will be a difficulty in arranging for their showing—there always has been—unless an adequate organisation exists to co-ordinate the supply of films for exhibition.

Both individual and society must be relieved of the irksome necessity of engaging in prolonged correspondence with half-a-dozen different parties in order to get together material for a single evening's programme. The first step towards the achievement of this is bigger membership of the organisations catering for the amateur.

You will want to see what other amateurs are doing. It is essential for your own progress in the art of film making that you should. In the long run, therefore, the vitality of the movement depends on the interchange of ideas, made possible by the frequent exhibition of amateur films. And that involves the co-operation of the amateur in two important particulars: in allowing a copy of his work to be made for circulation by a reputable central body or by occasional exhibition of the original under proper safeguards; and in supporting that organisation so that its membership permits it to bear the expense of copying more and more films.

When once the films become readily available the movement cannot fail to thrive by what it feeds on, and a programme of sub-standard films come to be regarded as a guarantee of an aesthetically satisfying entertainment, compounded as it will be of material made and selected by enthusiasts for enthusiasts.

THE EDITOR.

DO IT YOURSELF!

practical ideas for the handyman

MULTIPLANE MODEL SETS

Part II.

IN the last article, we reached the stage of planning out the space of our model set from the original perspective sketch or "picture" of the scene we wish to construct. We established the position of the principal object, the puppet, and the objects in the immediate foreground. We also fixed the distance limits and selected suitable objects at suitable distances to build up the middle distances in the scene. Furthermore, with only the original sketch to guide us, we determined the actual sizes of all these objects on the full size scale and found out their true positions in space in terms of distance from the camera. The task ahead of us now is to transfer these objects to a model set of reasonable dimensions.

Although we are going into this scene in great detail, it must be realised that there may be many different shots in the film of a similar nature. The scene itself may be different but the same principles will apply. Consequently, we must choose our scales and "planes" with other scenes in view so that the same model stage may be used for a number of sequences. The key to the choice is the puppet himself.

It will be evident that we shall have to have several editions of the puppet and his associates and in most cases three will be the minimum. We shall have a head and shoulders model to a relatively large scale for close-up shots when we wish to portray facial expression. Next, we shall require a full model to a fairly large scale for shots in which he appears more or less full length. Facial expression will probably be limited to eye movement, but arms and legs must be free to move as required. Finally, we shall probably need a small edition having leg and arm movements only for shots in which the puppet appears in the distance or middle distance. Since we intend him to appear from somewhere about the knees up in the sequence we have under discussion now, the Number Two edition will be our choice.

From a practical point of view, the figure should be about six inches high so as not to be too "fiddling" when it comes to imparting movement to his limbs. The very easy scale of One Inch to One Foot will give us a puppet five and a half inches tall and thus our main basic scale is determined. Now we cannot "compress" the puppet without

In each issue our contributor supplies worth-while ideas: things to make and things to do. Suggestions for gadgets are welcomed.

By G. A. GAULD, B.Sc.

distortion; consequently we must place him at the true scale distance from the camera, i.e., 20 inches. We will give him a little room on the stage, say 4 inches, thus bringing the front of the stage 16 inches from the camera.

Now it is quite clear that we cannot set our hill at the true scale distance from the camera, for that would require a stage 5,000 inches, or 417 feet long! This is where we apply compression, and bearing in mind such matters as depth of focus, etc., I am going to set the limit of my model stage at 30 inches "deep" bringing the background plane to 46 inches from the camera (see Fig. 6).

For the purpose of illustration, we are taking the very simple case in which the puppet will move across the field of view and make no movement to or from the camera. Therefore, we can afford to compress the distance to the first foreground object, the fence. Its true scale distance would be 35 inches, but I have chosen to place it 24 inches distant from the camera. Now exactly what effect will this have on the scale to which the fence must be built? Let us return to the original sketch, Fig. 1, and its division into planes.

In Fig. 4, the upper, smaller sketches represent each of the main objects which constitute the picture. They are all drawn to the same scale as if each had been "lifted out" of the original sketch. Now if the dimensions of the picture or its component parts were based on the first component "P," Fig. 4 where the puppet is drawn to the scale of 1 inch to 1 foot, and if this picture were placed 20 inches from the camera at S_1 , Fig. 5, I think it will be clear that the camera image on the film "I" would be a miniature of the original sketch. If, however, we wish to get the same miniature with the picture set further back at S_2 , it is clear that it will have to be drawn to a larger size. In the same way, if we pick out one of the component planes and set it further away from the camera, it will, relatively,

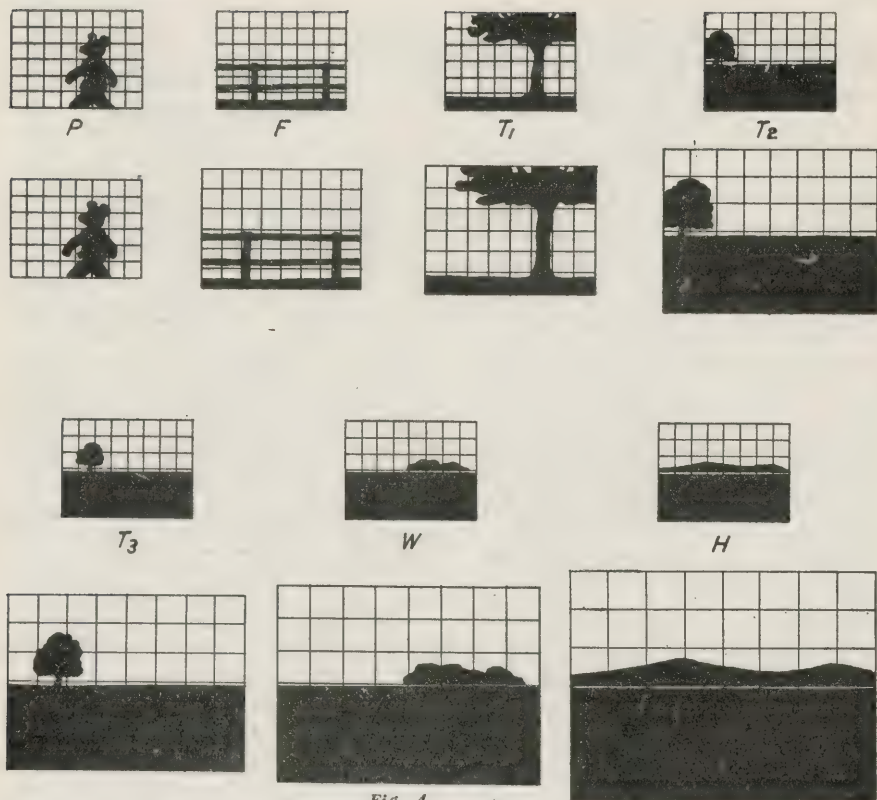


Fig. 4.

have to be larger in size (not scale) if it is to give the correct image on the film. In fact, if we take it far enough away, back to the distance of the original object, the "cutout" will, of course, have to be made full size. Thus, we shall only have to apply the same geometrical relation which we used to build up the picture, but this time "in reverse" to calculate the size and scale of the plane once we have decided upon its location in the model set. Luckily, we can do this in a very simple way without going into the detail required for the construction or dissection of the original picture.

If we still take a single frame of 16mm. film as being approximately 0.4 inches by 0.3 inches, it is a simple matter to calculate the size of the rectangle which will "fill" the film frame at any given distance. Still using our one inch lens in the camera and applying the formula:

$$\begin{aligned} O &= \text{I.D. (inches)} \\ \text{Plane Width} &= 0.4 \times D. \text{ (inches)} \end{aligned}$$

For example, we have set the plane for

the fence at 24 inches from the camera in the model set. Its width will be:

$$\begin{aligned} &0.4 \times 24 \\ &= 9.6 \text{ inches} \end{aligned}$$

Its depth will be three quarters of this, or, 7.2 inches.

Now all that it is necessary to do is to draw a rectangle on a piece of stiff drawing paper 9.6 inches by 7.2 inches, and divide it into the same number of squares as drawn on the original sketch. In all probability, this will be unnecessarily detailed and it will be sufficient to draw in the lines corresponding to every fifth square, as I have done in Fig. 4. Using the resulting grid as a guide, it is a simple matter to select the wanted component for the plane, in this case the fence, and sketch it in. It will then automatically be drawn to the correct size and scale and when fully drawn in, shaded and cut out, will, if set up on the model stage at 24 inches from the camera, produce exactly the same image as would the "original" on the full size scale at a distance of 30 feet.

Now in Fig. 6, I have selected suitable positions for the various planes in the model set. The fence was placed at 4 inches beyond the puppet to avoid shadows and other such snags which might occur since the distance has been compressed. However, as we wish the tree to cast a shadow on the fence, I have compressed the true scale distance of 5 inches to two, bringing it to 26 inches from the camera. As much space as we can afford has been given between the foreground tree and the first tree in the middle distance because we shall use some fluffy material to represent the grass in the meadow. The next tree plane has been set at 36 inches, the wood at 40 inches and the hill, which will be an ordinary backdrop complete with "sky," is set at the back of the model stage 46 inches from the camera.

Here is a table giving the "frame" sizes at each of these positions:

Plane (see Fig. 6)	I.D. ins. (Width)	Plane Width ins.	Plane = Depth ins.	True Scale 10' =
P	4X20	8.0	6.0	10.00"
F	4X24	9.6	7.2	8.00"
T ₁	4X26	10.4	7.8	7.43"
T ₂	4X32	12.8	9.6	1.07"
T ₃	4X36	14.4	10.8	.90"
W	4X40	16.0	12.0	.80"
H	4X46	18.4	13.8	.69"

Each of these "planes" or rectangles is divided into squares as described in the case of the fence plane "F" and the outline of the selected objects drawn in. These are shown in the lower illustrations in Fig. 4. Since they are drawn to the same relative scale as plane "P," an indication is given of how they will appear when drawn out for the model set.

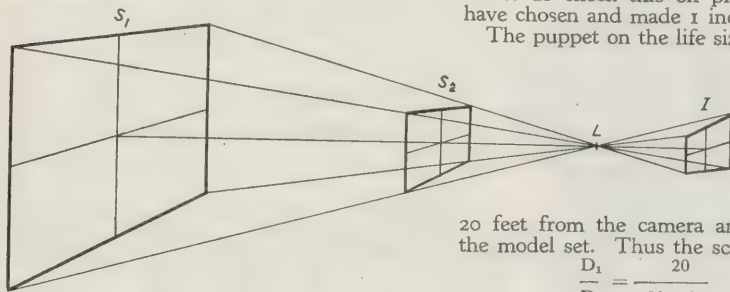


Fig. 5.

Although I have mentioned "cutouts" in connection with the planes, it will be better if the foreground planes are given some degree of real solidity. Thus the fence can be constructed of wood strips and the tree can be rounded in the trunk by bending a piece of cardboard while leaf masses may be made up from cutouts from several sheets of

paper. The remaining planes, T₁, T₂, and W, however, can be simple cutouts, while the rearmost plane of all, H, will be a full backdrop with the hill and sky drawn and painted in.

If these planes are assembled on the model set in the positions indicated in Fig. 6, and if the camera is set up at the correct position C, then the film image will be identical with the original sketch Fig. 1 or for that matter, a photograph of the original scene. It is important to realise, however, that the whole set will only be in correct proportion when "viewed" either by the human eye or the eye of the camera at the correct position C in Fig. 6.

For camera movement and the application of the multiplane technique, there is still one further item of information required, the true scale of the drawings on the various planes.

Referring back to our old formula:

$$O = I.D.$$

if we take O to be the full size object, O₁ the object as drawn on the plane in question, D the distance in inches from the camera to the real object and D₁ the distance to the plane, we have:

$$\text{and } \begin{aligned} O &= I.D. \\ O_1 &= I.D_1 \end{aligned}$$

"I" being the image in either case.

Now the scale of the drawing on the plane on which O₁ appears can be expressed the ratio O₁: O and from the above equations:

$$\text{Scale} = \frac{O_1}{O} = \frac{D_1}{D}$$

Let us check this on plane P which we have chosen and made 1 inch = 1 foot.

The puppet on the life size scale is distant

20 feet from the camera and 20 inches on the model set. Thus the scale is:

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{D_1}{D} &= \frac{20}{20 \times 12} \\ &= 1/12 \end{aligned}$$

i.e., 1 foot on the full size object is represented by 1/12, or 1 inch on the model, confirming the scale chosen.

Now let us look at the next plane F. We have "compressed" the true scale distance from 30 inches to 24 inches. Had it been at 30 inches, the scale would have been, of

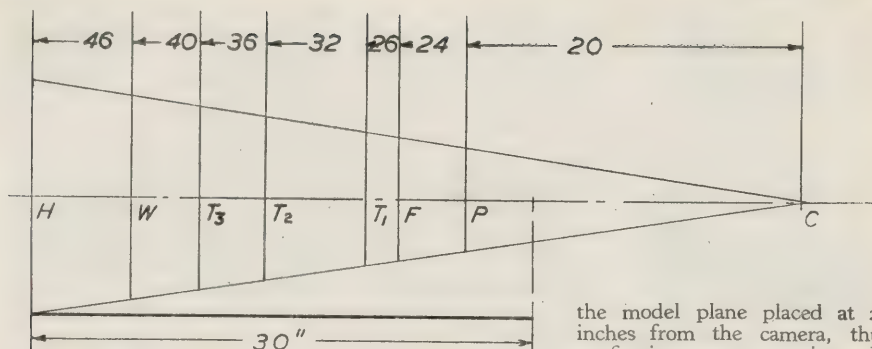


Fig. 6.

course, 1 inch = 1 foot, but having brought the model fence nearer to the camera, to compensate for the increase in image size which this would have produced, we have actually drawn it a bit smaller. That is to say we shall have drawn it to a scale of less than 1 inch = 1 foot. The formula will give us the scale, thus :

$$\frac{O_1}{O} = \frac{D_1}{D} = \frac{24}{30 \times 12} = \frac{1}{15}$$

i.e., 1 foot or 12 inches on the full size object will be represented by 1/15 or 0.8 inches on

the model plane placed at 24 inches from the camera, thus confirming our expectations. In the same way, the true scales of the remaining planes can be worked out and I have given these in the last column of the table set out above. The figures represent the length in inches on the appropriate plane corresponding to a length of 10 feet in the original full size object.

In the next article, we shall use these scales to get the correct movements of each plane so that the final effect as produced on the film image will correspond exactly to the effect which would be obtained were the scene photographed in its "natural," full sized setting. Meantime, I hope I shall not receive a host of letters pointing out that this is a cine magazine, not a textbook of Algebra !

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Filming in the fields.

Overseas Item

IN a Services Club in Cairo a film called "Egypt, Gift of the Nile" is being screened. It is a competent, ordinary educational movie on 16mm. stock, but it represented 15 months work by an enterprising member of the R.A.F. Photographic Section in the Middle East. The producer, Leading Aircraftsman K. Boulton, describes the film in a letter from Cairo.

It was all done in my spare time (he says) and took 15 months to make. After a "premiere" at a Service Club, it has been screened in numerous halls, forces clubs, and social groups throughout Cairo, and I am now at work on a special musical accompaniment made up of gramophone records.

The film is intended for use in English schools as an instructional film on Egypt, and although not originally designed for Egyptian children, the Egyptian Ministry of Education is already considering the purchase of copies of the picture. It lasts about an hour and deals with Egyptian crops, irrigation, the peasant life, the Nile (which provides the main theme, showing the country's dependence on the river), and a sequence on Cairo, and an up-to-date model farm, with

Opportunities—such as that which came to L. A. C. Boulton—of making personal films while serving in the Forces are likely to come to only few of our readers. But there must be many Service readers, both men and women, who have interesting stories to tell, a point of view to put, related to films—even if their contact with the cinema is no closer than that described by the Editor on page 185. The Editor would like to hear from them; and since he himself has been serving in the Forces for the past three years, they can be assured that their contributions will be received with understanding and consideration.



Typical Egyptian scene—a felucca on a canal.

modern methods contrasted with the old methods of the peasants.

It was not an easy job, of course; spare time was limited, and materials, especially film, were very difficult to get, and expensive. There is no film available in the shops nowadays, but I was able to get enough earlier on, mainly Agfa reversal stock (which was



Taking some shots from the top of the Great Pyramid.

a dead stock with the dealers, as the processing of this type of film stopped when war broke out), to see me through, supplemented by some Kodak film, which the Kodak Company in Cairo are still processing. The last price of Kodak 16mm. Super XX reversal film before it was all sold out was 250 P.T. for 100ft. (or £2-10-0). The Agfa stock I had to process myself, by the way.

The camera I used was an Agfa Movex, f/3.5 lens, which I was able to buy for a fairly reasonable price out here, because it takes Agfa-loaded special magazines and was again partly unsaleable for the same reason as the film. I therefore loaded the magazines myself from 100ft. lengths of stock.

Egypt is full of material for the cine camera, but it is very difficult to obtain natural shots of the natives, as they cluster around you and clamour for "baksheesh." My knowledge of Arabic (by now fairly good) is a great asset, and by talking to them a bit first and then distributing a little "baksheesh" or a few cigarettes, I managed to get things organised. By the way, the title of the film is a phrase resurrected by my

scenario writer, Mlle. Edith Jaffe. Also on my "staff" was one Emile Balravi, of the Studios Mier (the largest Egyptian film company), who gave me some valuable assistance.

Most of the material was taken round about Cairo and the surrounding countryside, but on a leave down in Luxor I was able to get some shots of Upper Egypt, and even took some in Asuran, 600 miles away, and in the Delta. Dr. Hurst, who is Director-General of the Physical Department of the Egyptian Ministry of Public Works, gave me a lot of help in obtaining permits to film the Delta Bawajr (a dam across the Nile below Cairo) and a Government pumping station used for the irrigation systems. The weather in Egypt is excellent for film purposes; blue sky for nine months of the year every day. The light, though strong, is not too harsh in the Nile Valley.

It was good fun making this film, which grew into a more ambitious effort than originally designed; and I was certainly glad to have something useful to occupy my spare time.

Pathe Chargers Wanted

No. 2328642 Sigm. Harding, P., 268, Forward Delivery Squadron, B.L.A., writes that, although he has managed to get hold of some 9.5mm. film, he has been unable to buy any empty chargers in which to load it. If any reader has a spare P or H type charger we are sure that our correspondent would be most grateful for it.

A New Addition to the "Addalite"

In our issue for Winter, 1944 we described the excellent "Addalite" light unit of Henry Jacobs and Co., which is so eminently suitable for the amateur cine worker. We now report that the latest models incorporate an improvement, which has been added without any increase in the cost of the outfit.

This is a circular bakelite moulded distribution box to which are carried the twin-flex leads from the two reflector units. They are wired in parallel to the

contacts in the box, from which a single pair proceeds to the plug connecting with the mains. This not only prevents the trailing of an unwanted quantity of flex, but also provides an additional safeguard. The box is held to the central column of the unit by means of two light metal spring clips. Should the main lead be accidentally pulled or jerked the box comes away from the column. There is no pull on the whole outfit which might tend to capsize it and break the lamps, nor is there any pull on the lamp fittings themselves. It is a matter of seconds only to clip the box back into position.

New Society Invites Members

Enquiries by prospective members living in the London area are invited by the County Cine and Dramatic Society, BM/VJSJ, London, W.C.1. It has not yet been found possible to begin production, but meetings are held from time to time.

Piccadilly

FAMOUS LIBRARY FILMS, No. 25.

A critical commentary by H. A. V. BULLEID, M.A.

Production ..	British International Pictures, Boreham Wood, 1928.
Trade Review ..	February 7th, 1929.
English Release ..	February 3rd, 1930.
Distributed by ..	Wardour.
Length ..	9,500 feet.
Directed by ..	E. A. Dupont.
Photography ..	Warner Brandes.
Design ..	Alfred Jünge.
Derivation ..	Written specially for the screen by Arnold Bennett
The Players, in order of appearance	
Gilda Grey	as Mabel Greenfield.
Cyril Ritchard	as Victor Smiles (<i>lic</i>).
JAMESON THOMAS	as Valentine Wilmot (<i>the Manager</i>).
Charles Laughton	as A Continental Visitor.
ANNA MAY WONG	as Shosho.
Hannah Jones	as Bessie (<i>Kitchen Staff Supervisor</i>).
King Ho-Chang	as Jim.
Production started on July 26th, 1928.	
Sub-Standard Availability :—? (SB) reels, 9.5mm.	
Also 8 reels, 16mm.	

PICCADILLY ranks very high amongst English silent films ; being undoubtedly, of its type, the best produced in this country. B.I.P. seem to have spared no trouble or expense to secure quality in every department : the special story, the lavish sets, the excellent cast and the famed foreign technicians (though these started the line of jokes about "English Films") could not have failed to appease any carping critic who might have been called in to approve them : indeed, one might say that the "international" methods of Hollywood, whereby the World's talent was ruthlessly purchased regardless either of cost or of the ultimate fate of that talent, were being copied so meticulously that success must be assured. Average success was duly achieved : but we have to log two disappointments : a major one that the director of *Vaudeville* fell so far short of this previous triumph, and a minor one that a rather shabby trick title is used. An excellent film is yet to be made about *Piccadilly*—one recalls Ruttman's *Berlin* (1927-8)—but *Piccadilly* is concerned with the affairs of a gentleman who "happens" to be the manager of the "Piccadilly Club," one Valentine Wilmot.

Mabel and Vic are the star dancers at this Club : the former is Wilmot's wife, the latter becomes over-familiar with her and so is sacked.

Visiting the kitchens regarding a complaint, Wilmot sees a Chinese girl, Shosho, doing an impromptu dance.

Business falls off since Vic's departure, and in desperation Wilmot signs Shosho as a new attraction. She stipulates the purchase of an expensive costume, and the engagement of her fiancé Jim as accompanist. They duly appear, with sensational success.

Wilmot drives Shosho home : Mabel is overcome with pique and jealousy. Wilmot and Shosho foregather in Limehouse ; she hands over her apartment key . . .

Placards announce : Murder of Shosho. In court Jim states that Wilmot entered the apartment and that *he went away leaving Wilmot with Shosho*. Wilmot admits ownership of the revolver found by the body. Mabel then interrupts to testify :—she followed them to Limehouse—was let in by Jim *after Wilmot left*—pleaded with Shosho to keep away from Wilmot—threatened her with Wilmot's revolver when she refused—fainted. This contradiction regarding Jim's presence causes the Coroner to demand his recall : but he has shot himself. He gasps out his story of Shosho's rebuff, their struggle, the dropped revolver, the fatal shot.

Placards announce :—Shosho Confession and Suicide. And :—Life Goes On.

* * * * *

The banality of this story equals that of *Vaudeville* : but unhappily it lacks the redeeming features of the carefully-chosen *action* to explain details, and of *action* as opposed to dialogue at the key-points of the narrative. Thus, Mabel admits her jealousy in a slow-tempo sequence full of titles, whereas Boss learns the truth in the cafe in a quick-tempo sequence and only one title. Again, explanatory titles slow down the Court scene opening reel 3 and destroy the surprise element in the climax : whereas in *Vaudeville* we imagine the trapeze accident and are kept taut with suspense right through the performance and the actual killing.

These examples illustrate the very fundamentals of film construction. They are equally applicable to talkies : the more so just now when the art of quick cutting for a fast, dramatic rhythm is being lost amid the craze for the wandering camera and the reliance on a noisy sound track for dramatic effect (e.g., *The Mask of Dimitrios* : 1944, by Jean Negulesco, a new director who doesn't appear to have heard of montage, though he knew and inappropriately copied the wavy mixes of Coward's *In Which We Serve*).

The Trade Reviews were embarrassingly eulogistic . . .

" . . . supremely well played and brilliantly produced . . . Certain attraction for any house . . . the most striking film issued recently from a British studio and reflects every possible credit on all concerned in its making . . . will appeal to the most critical . . . The entire cast is perfect in every detail."

(*Bioscope*, Feb., 1929).

As was usual, a year elapsed between *Piccadilly's* première and general release: so that contemporary releases included only one important silent film, *The Wonderful Lie*, but four well-remembered talkies: *Alias Jimmy Valentine* (by Jack Conway, with William Haines), *Bulldog Drummond* (with Ronald Colman, Joan Bennett, Lilyan Tashman), *High Treason* (by Maurice Elvy, with Benita Hume, Jameson Thomas) and *Innocents of Paris* (with Maurice Chevalier).

It should be noted that, as with many late silent films, *Piccadilly* was shot (and must be projected) at about 20 frames per second.

* * * * *

The establishing ext. night L.S. of the Piccadilly Club facade is spoiled by the passing of a bus carrying an advertisement. Well-lit and imposing int. L. Shots follow: then C.S. wine bottles mixes to M.S. audience expectant. A card introduces Mabel and Vic: orchestra strikes up: in full L.S. from high angle the two dancers enter, down the double stair from the balcony in the background of this excellent set. Several rather uninspired shots cover the dancers, then C.M.S. discovers Jameson Thomas standing half-way up the stair, looking suave. Two men diners discuss him, so that he is introduced as Wilmot the Manager in a dialogue title: one of them further remarks "—he also started Mabel, and made her too. You can imagine the rest." The cutting from them to Wilmot is timed to perfection.

The little episode of Laughton and the dirty plate is very nicely done. He stops the waiter, who is on the point of serving



Table-thumping. Charles Laughton in "*Piccadilly*."

him: sends for head waiter who deprecatingly hovers: tracking shots cover the amused reactions of other diners; and the anxiety of the temporarily-forgotten performer Mabel; and, best of all, Laughton (now thoroughly worked up) banging his table with rhythmic insistence. A clean plate is carefully placed before him. The dance ends. Applause is covered in shots of two corners of the restaurant connected by a fast pan: a cut would have been better. Vic makes a great show of kissing his partner's arm and shoulders: they separate and run up the stairs, the camera panning ahead to rest at C.M.S. Wilmot, disapproving: again a straight cut would have been better. One vaguely feels, having in mind the period, that this specially-imported cameraman thought he was expected to keep his camera moving about, and resolved to do so at all costs. This disease looks like recurring: in *The Mask of Dimitrios* the camera is wheeled right round Lorre and Greenstreet for no earthly reason . . . unless, as one fears, it was an attempt to infuse interest (?) into a decaying situation clogged with dialogue.

Wilmot proceeds to the kitchen (allowance must be made for continuity breaks due to pruning), retrieves famous dirty plate, proceeds (track) to scullery, where a steamy L.S. shows Shosho dancing and no work being done. A beautifully-lit C.M.S. tilts from top to toe of the dancer and then pans to admiring colleagues beside her. Wilmot stands by the door. The alarm is given by a man who expresses dismay and then turns to see what has dismayed him—thoroughly bad direction of a bit player. Conversely, there is an excellently directed shot of three dishwashers, now assiduously working, one of whom raises guilty eyes for a peek at the boss. Wilmot hands over the offending



Jameson Thomas and Gilda Grey.



The Star Dancer: Anna May Wong as Shosho in B.I.P.'s "Piccadilly" (1928, by E. A. Dupont).

plate to the supervisor who duly lays down the law in a grand gesture. In a corridor Wilmot meets Mabel, pauses to regret the affair.

Wilmot sacks Vic by handing over a prim note, which is rather ludicrous. The effect of Vic's absence is excellently shown by a C.S. of the table reservations list, bare of bookings. This point is then laboured in a well-acted but over-titled office sequence with Wilmot and Santos, the head waiter, who demands a new attraction . . .

Again with good cause-and-effect, a M.S. fades-in to discover Shosho being shepherded into Wilmot's office. She sits at a distance. Quite ingeniously, the interview is shown from *her* end only: with medium-Close-ups of her and the titles giving the replies to questions which are merely suggested. Then Wilmot gets up and paces about and after more titles it is agreed to buy a costume from the Limehouse shop suggested by Shosho. Wilmot's indecision at this gamble with the unknown girl is well portrayed by his pacing, carried through the shots of Shosho, and with cut-in low-angle Close-ups as he pauses or turns.

Wilmot reaches the Limehouse restaurant, where chop-sticks are being plied, and the waiter directs him to the inner shop. The camera follows him down a passage and, a neat idea, swings *with* the door he pushes open, to show both him entering and the "shop" wherein Jim is seated at work. A curtain parts to reveal the Boss. Two shots cover this, showing the parting curtain from Wilmot's and then the Boss's eye; this is presumably for dramatic emphasis but is wrong, because it gives a sudden start of quick rhythm to a sequence that should be slow, i.e., with lengthy shots.

A slow track up to Wilmot would be preferable, with a dramatic climax (but no cut) as the curtain is parted.

Shosho appears through a curtained recess. Amid much slinky walking about and one stupid C.S. of Wilmot, moustache-stroking (all excellently lit and the "shop" is a grandly realistic set), Jim tries on the costume selected by Shosho: there is some price haggling, but Shosho refuses to appear without that particular costume, and Wilmot pays. Emboldened, she further demands Jim as accompanist, and again succeeds. The last long shot, with the Boss pleasedly bowing, is really admirable.

Inexplicably, we *mix* to Wilmot playing the piano at his own rehearsal room: correctly, *fades* should have punctuated these sequences. Wilmot compliments Mabel on the new dance she has just rehearsed, then explains about Shosho, to be met with a very unfavourable (and very sub-titular) reaction: *Fade-out* on C.S. Mabel . . . (and in this case a *mix* could serve!).

. . . *Fade-in*, M.S. Jim playing: C.M.S. (with pan and tilt as required, and executed with a very perfection of rhythmic smoothness) Shosho dances: then M.S., then L.S., then full L.S., the Piccadilly Club floor now decorated with huge revolving glass spheres of light, intermittently flashing. Here the design, lighting and camera-work are absolutely beyond reproach. Wilmot watches as before, half-way up the stair, circles of light drifting past him. Mabel also watches from the back, not so pleased. Pointedly, L.S. of a burst of applause from a group of standing men is cut to full C.S. of her annoyance. The dance ends with a full L.S. from high angle, the whole staff of waiters watching in the background—a nice touch.

With startling abruptness (in this pruned version) we cut to C.S. of newspaper headlines announcing Shosho's success. She reads with delight, though the little sequence is so badly handled that no help is given to the actors: one C.S. has inexplicable lines of light on it, and a completely superfluous and largely out-of-focus tracking shot hovers past Shosho up to the newspaper: then, wrongly again, *fade-out*, and *fade-in* to C.S. Mabel's hands crumpling the paper, and her feet stamping it; and, as if it were not already over-obvious, *pan* to a M.S. glimpse of her, again out of focus, before quick *fade-out*. Consider another "comparison" scene, that of Emil Jannings comparing his wife to Bertha Marie in reel 2 of *Vaudeville*; and so prove the merits of keeping the camera still.

Shosho asks Wilmot to drive her home. He eyes a note (these notes!) received from Mabel, asking him to come; but decides

on Shosho. In the chauffeur-driven Rolls, Shosho speaks to a glum, left-behind Jim: and then, sitting remotely from Wilmot, they drive off.

The Limehouse street exterior is good both in design—a low arch spans the road, the lighting is good, and it happily lacks the appearance of having been built the day before—and in choice and grouping of extra players, who look and act the part: in marked contrast to the amazing figures draped round the walls of the Paris night-haunt in *The Rat* (1925). One CM.S. covers the alighting from the car, Shosho's "Thank you, Goodnight, Mr. Wilmot" and his return into the car: fade-out.

Fade-in C.S. of a turning door knob unnecessarily precedes Wilmot's return to Mabel: she looks up snootily from a



The first "Thank you, good-night—" in Limehouse. Wilmot and Shosho.

book . . . The sequence that follows is so thoroughly bad that it merits quoting as an object lesson:—

- (a) CM.S. He sits on couch beside her, takes her hand to kiss, but she withdraws it and says . . .
- (b) TITLE *"—and you have the nerve to try and kiss me."*
- (c) C.S. (over her shoulder) he looks dismayed.
- (d) L.S. He leans towards her, but she haughtily gets to her feet and turns her back on him. He also rises. She extends a hand towards him, showing . . .
- (e) C.S. . . . wedding ring just visible behind ornate dress ring.
- (f) CM.S. She turns her back on him again. He says . . .
- (g) TITLE *"Shosho begged me to drive her home—Really I couldn't refuse the girl."*
- (h) CM.S. (as f) . . . he says. She haughtily counters. He protests . . .
- (i) TITLE *"You're quite wrong, my dear. I didn't even see the outside of the house. She insisted on leaving me at the corner."*
- (j) CM.S. (as f) Mabel therefore remarks . . .
- (k) TITLE *"Oh! So she had to insist."*
- (l) CM.S. (new angle) She walks away from him.

- (m) M.S. She stands apart . . .
- (n) C.S. . . . rather moodily . . . walks out of frame.
- (o) CM.S. Wilmot suddenly laughs, teases her.
- (p) TITLE *"Mab, darling! Surely you aren't jealous!"*
- (q) C.S. She turns and blurts out . . .
- (r) TITLE *"That's just what I am! Jealous! Jealous!—and it seems to me I've got good reason to be.—Never will I dance in the Piccadilly again!"*
- (s) C.S. (as q) She says, adding . . .
- (t) TITLE *"Please go! I ask you to go—now!"*
- (u) CM.S. (as o) Wilmot looks surprised, walks forward . . .
- (v) CM.S. Mab leans against a cabinet, one hand on hip. Wilmot walks up, touches her arm: she edges away, walks away from him; he pauses, then follows.
- (w) L.S. They both open their bedroom doors, hover irresolutely on the thresholds, then droop in. The doors close . . . Slow fade-out.

The only redeeming feature of this sequence is the beautiful composition and arrangement of shot (v), taken from high angle and with a light-fitting crossing the foreground. Reading the seven titles one after the other will immediately indicate the entire meaning of the sequence, so that in effect the pictures are superfluous! Their redundant verbosity, their unbalance in length (the longest, (r), should come at a dramatic moment of quick cutting, yet its length demands 250 frames!), and the absolute imbecility of (t), fill the present writer with astonished dismay. The cutting is equally incompetent and dilatory: both shots (n) and (v) are held for several frames after the actor's head is no longer visible, and the dreary shot (f-h-j), which is one shot with three titles, is really depressing. The complete failure of the actress to infuse any sympathy or power into what is meant to be a dramatic scene, must be partly attributed to this faulty montage, which in turn is partly due to the failure of the Director (and scenario-writer) to provide appropriate film strips. In addition there



Shot (a). Fear—Shosho stares at Jim.



Shot (g). Murder—King Ho-Chang as Jim.

are trivial errors, such as Wilmot saying "Mabel—" in shot (o) whereas title (p) says "Mab—"; and the oddity of both the bedroom lights being on when the doors are opened . . . though this may have been dramatic licence demanded by the cameraman.

A few shots, all nicely arranged, cover Wilmot and Shosho (holding hands, rather ludicrously) in a Limehouse haunt: the latter remarks "You see, this is our Piccadilly"—again the confusion of the meaning of the film's title.

A very lengthy tracking shot shows Wilmot and Shosho walking under the arch previously shown: they pause, held in C.M.S. Then in one shot we have C.S. Shosho puts her hand on Wilmot's; tilt to C.S. Wilmot, startled; tilt back to C.S. hand, removed to show key left in Wilmot's hand. The tilts are jerk-tilts, but cuts would have been better, specially as the camera gives a sickly lurch during the C.S. of Wilmot. The last shot is unusual: a L.S. of the pair by the arch: a lorry slowly pulls in, obscuring our view of them; and when the lorry has passed by they are no longer in sight. There is nothing theoretically wrong with this trick, designed to leave open their subsequent movements: but it is spoiled for those who recall Harold Lloyd's identical gag in his attempts to elude the suspicious cop at the start of the climb in *Safety Last* (1923).

However, we are well and dramatically pulled back to reality by L.S. of posters yelling the murder. The tracking shot is irritatingly superfluous. The headlines indicate to-morrow's Coroner's Inquest: from which we mix to a fine L.S. of the Coroner's court, then C.S. of the Coroner. Six titles

cover Jim's evidence, and make things look dim for Wilmot, who is next taken. Four more titles admit it is his gun: then the Coroner says: "Gentlemen, there seems to be no further evidence. You may now consider your verdict." Interruption comes from veiled Mabel, however, and after three more titles we flash-back to her story: M.S. her shadow dodges out of sight; L.S. (amid swirling smoke/fog) Wilmot exits from a house, she thereupon (after argument with Jim is excellent low-angle C.S.) enters; Shosho reclines on a divan: her eyes slowly open, cut to M.S. of Mabel entering, seen from her eyes, the opening lids being represented by two shaped shutters: nicely done but wrong in a story told by Mabel. Four titles cover Shosho's refusal to give up Wilmot, then . . .

- (a) C.S. Mabel's bag. She opens it, takes out pistol
- (b) C.S. Shosho's eyes dilate, she covers her face . . .
- (c) F.C.S. . . . her staring eyes seen through the transparent dress . . .
- (d) C.S. A sheathed dagger hanging on the wall: her hand takes it . . .
- (e) C.S. She holds it by her . . .
- (f) C.S. Mabel looks in horror . . .
- (g) C.S. (as e) She bares the dagger: its shadow passes her staring eyes . . .
- (h) C.S. Mabel levels her pistol, wavers: the screen darkens: the darkness clears and Mabel collapses: *fade-out*.

Back in court, five more titles convince the Coroner that there's perjury somewhere: then comes the great message: "The Chinese boy has shot himself—He's lying beside the girl in the mortuary." They troop with dignity into the mortuary, where Jim recovers sufficiently to tell his tale—after an introductory title: he challenged Shosho, she put him off—this is well conveyed without titles: then Jim gets his hands on her throat, and as they sway, struggling, the camera swings swiftly with them, excellently done. One shot silhouettes them against a glass partition. Shosho momentarily escapes, then we see Jim's hand slide into the edge of the frame . . . he pins her down, starts to strangle her, but is once more pushed away on to the floor: his hand finds the dropped pistol . . .

- (a) C.S. Shosho regards him in terror (one eye and hand are visible only).
- (b) C.M.S. Jim looks up at her, holding pistol.
- (c) C.S. (as a) the eye . . . then she jerks away . . .
- (d) C.S. (low angle) . . . and covers against the wall . . .
- (e) C.S. (high angle) Jim, raises pistol, fires (one blank frame at shot).
- (f) C.S. (as d) Flash occurs after 6 frames; Shosho's eyes close . . .
- (g) C.S. (as e) Jim very slowly lowers the pistol.
- (h) C.S. (as f) Shosho falls sideways out of the frame.

Slow fade-out.

Slow fade-in . . .

- (i) C.M.S. Posters proclaiming:—Shosho; confession and suicide.

- (i) M.S. Sandwich-men walk by, carrying poster advertising a show: *Life Goes On*.

Slow fade-out.

... and thus the film ends, with a last shot which is crudely cynical and far removed from the famous narrative last shot of *Vaudeville*. A later attempt by Dupont, also unsatisfactory because insufficiently explicit, was the serene L.S. of empty, boundless sea, which ended *Atlantic* (1929).

In the above-quoted final sequences, shot (a) is a fine and original arrangement, strongly expressing fear. Shot (f) is better than the bald scenario statement conveys: the flash, Shosho's spasm, and the instant of cutting back to (g) are very well timed, though it is assumed that the flash must refer to a second shot. Indeed, both this and the other melodramatic sequence with Mabel, previously quoted, are very well done within the limits prescribed by the scenario. And it is a grand relief to get away from the stodgily sub-titular Coroner's court, where in spite of a few well-grouped shots, and fair acting types, stagnation looms large amid the verbiage of the twenty sub-titles.

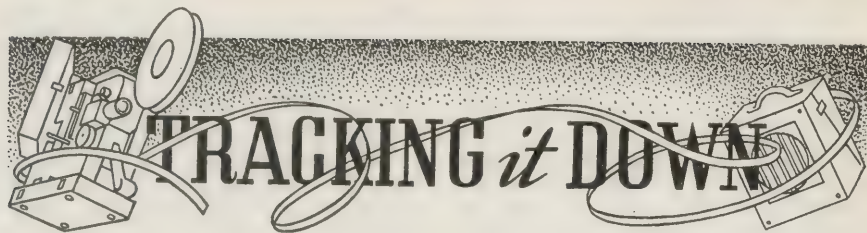
Piccadilly is undoubtedly an extremely well-photographed film: and this very fact, taken in reference to some of the shortcomings mentioned above, goes to prove the vital need for full sympathy and understanding between Director, Cameraman and Cutter. This was obviously not attained, hence the failures: in *Vaudeville* it was attained, hence the success. Werner Brandes photographed also the charming *Waltz Dream* (1926, by Ludwig Berger, UFA, with Mady Christians, Willy Fritsch). Photographed by Arthur Edeson, a front-rank American for over 20 years (he shot *The Lost World*, 1924-5), the recent *Mask of Dimitrios* is comparable with *Piccadilly*. In each case we see a succession of shots upon which, seen individually, we could venture no adverse criticism: joined together, however, they fail to bring a stirring message because they are not cinematically appropriate: that is, they are not so imbued with the essentials of matching, montage, acting-in-relation-to-sequence, speed, tone, composition-in-relation-to-sequence, and timing that they can ever form a good film. We are thus driven again to the essential of the director having full control over the camera and seeing to it that every shot *does have* these cinematic attributes.

To a lesser extent a similar fault overshadows the acting in *Piccadilly*. Anna May Wong, remembered in Fairbanks's *Thief of Baghdad* (1924) and *Song* (= *Show Life*) (1928, by Richard Eichberg), also later English and American talkies including

Shanghai Express (1932, by Josef von Sternberg), never failed to turn in a good if somewhat inscrutable performance: but here we find a little unevenness, comparing the shyness-at-interview with the nonchalant bargaining-in-shop and the polished dancer at her première. The pruning of the 9mm. version accentuates this and most of the other faults, however. Jameson Thomas had his first (English) film engagement in 1914, appeared on the American stage with Bebe Daniels, and has made numerous English and American films including *Week-end Wives* (1928, by Harry Lachman, with Monty Banks, for B.I.P.) and *100 Men and a Girl* (1937, by Henry Koster with Deanna Durbin, for Universal: he played Stokowski's manager). Though smoothly assured, one gets the feeling in the "jealousy" sequence that he was not quite clear what was supposed to be happening. Hannah Jones contributes a neat character bit: C. Laughton bangs the table prophetically: fashions and insecure direction handicap Gilda Grey: and King Ho-Chang assiduously over-does facial expression throughout.

It will thus be seen that director Dupont's control of the actors, as well as of the camera, was incomplete, or inconsistent. A scenario of great excellence, giving good guidance as to the shots required for proper rhythm in the cutting, would have largely concealed this deficiency: but here, as so often in the English films of the period, the very opposite applies. Slow tempo and lengthy titles occur where there should be quick cutting—quite obviously the very basis of montage was unknown—and that to a Trade which had elegantly pooh-hoohed the famous 1925-6 Russian experiments! The scenario is less faulty from the aspect of disposition of material; for example, the Court scene, though dreary, has the merit of being so arranged that the second flash-back provides both the solution to the murder and the climax of the film. The scenario is not, however, *filmic* in conception: thus, when a linkage is sought between the two Lime-house visits, Shosho says in the first, "*Thank you. Goodnight, Mr. Wilmot*" and conversely Wilmot says in the second "*Thank you. Goodnight, Miss Shosho.*" This is neat but fundamentally wrong, as a title carries the link whereas an *action* should do so. (cf. Jannings triumphantly playing cards in *Vaudeville*).

That we should carry away interesting memories from this uneven production is mainly a tribute to the photographic quality, the always pleasing design and lighting, and the queerly attractive personality of Anna May Wong. H. A. V. Bulleid



Secretary: C. LESLIE THOMSON. B.Sc.

Secretary's Report

READERS will remember that some time ago we printed a photograph of a conversion carried out by Lieut.-Commander Heywood. Since then this very active enthusiast has made a fine job of another specimen of the same machine (Western Electric S.O.D.) and also an ambitious conversion of a little hand-cranked Ensign 16-50. Fig. 1a shows the operating side of the W.E. outfit, and it will be seen that it is much more compact than the previous conversion, although the general layout and mechanical features are similar. The present projector is driven by a universal-type motor with electrical governor, and the amplifier and power components are suitable for AC or DC operation. Fig. 1b is the operating side of the Ensign, which was made solely for home use. An inverted-burning 500-watt lamp is used, and the soundhead is similar to the "Bell-Howell" design. Fig. 1c shows the rear of the same machine, and visible are the centrifugal governor, amplifier power-pack, and the large smoothing-flywheel. The spool-arms are of solid cast aluminium, and the "blimp" carrying-case is rexine covered, with reinforced corners. Lieut.-Commander Heywood is certainly to be congratulated on his productions, and many of us must be distinctly envious of the exceptional facilities which these outfits suggest he has for such work.

One of the most interesting queries during the past quarter was a request for formulae of "electrolytic tracing" solutions—that is, chemicals which when applied to paper or other suitable support will darken on passage of an electric current. The possible application of this to sound-recording is an

interesting speculation if a suitable technique can be evolved. Mr. Roe, whose Note on "Elements of S.O.F. Recording" has been widely circulated, was able to provide the answer, a copy of which may be obtained on application by any other interested reader.

The business on hand consists of a reply to an enquiry on hall acoustics, and a discussion of some loudspeaker features important to sound-film users. The question dealing with hall-acoustics is answered by Philip Jenkins, whose Notes, "Effective Presentation" and "Sound Tracks," are well known to our readers. (These and other Notes may be borrowed on application, enclosing 4d. in stamps for each Note required.) As always, we are anxious to have suggestions, hints and tips from readers on all sound-film subjects, aesthetic or philosophic as well as the more material aspects. We should be glad also to hear from the more "workshop-minded" whether, after reading the discussion which follows, you would like to have constructional details of a horn-type tweeter—most probably in the form of a Note.

Hall Acoustics

Q. *I run several 16mm. shows each week, and in one of the halls the sound reproduction is very*

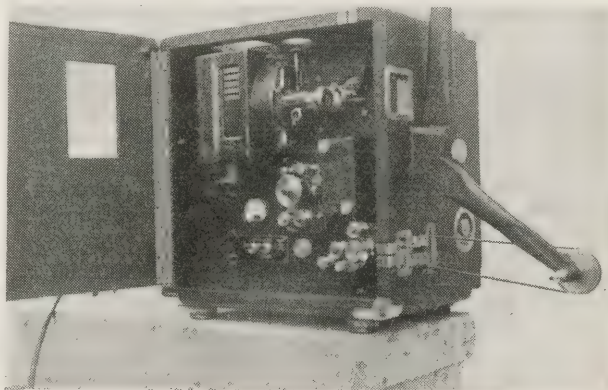


Fig. 1a. Western Electric, Mk. II.

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2" Kodak Special f/1.6 E or L lens	£6 15 0
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3" Small dia. 8", super quality lens	£3 3 0
3" Dallmeyer 1½" dia. lens	£6 6 0
New 9.5 Penrose Splitter, shortly available	£2 2 0

Spools and Cans

16mm. 400ft. New steel spools	2 9
16mm. 400ft. Aluminium, soiled spools	3 9
16mm. 400ft. Storage cans, used	1 3
9.5mm. 400ft. Spools	3 9
16mm. 800ft. Spools and cans, new	£1 0 0
16mm. 800ft. Spools, aluminium	10 6
16mm. 1,600ft. Spools, B. & H., G.B., etc.	£1 0 0
16mm. Rewind Benches, take up to 1,600ft., all metal, folding, fine job, new	£5 17 6

Electrical

Siemens 55v.-250w. lamps and resistors for 200v.-220v. mains	£3 5 0
Siemens Superlux lamp and special resistor, 375 watt	£5 0 0
Agfa 8 Movector 200w. lamp and resistor for 200v. main	£2 16 0
Ditmar 500v. lamps and resistance for 200/250v. mains, new	£7 17 6
Lamps in stock for Specto, Bell Howell, S.P. Ensign, Kodak C, D, E, Pathe Home Movie, Imp, some 200b models.	
Moving coil microphone	£5 0 0

SOUND FILMS—9.5mm.

SALE OR EXCHANGE

Having purchased a collection of brand new and nearly new films from the executors of one of our clients, we are able to offer these at reduced prices.

S/H indicates secondhand. S/S stock soiled.

"No Limit," 6 reels, new	
"Moscow Nights," 6 reels.	
"Calling All Stars," 4 reels.	
"Scrooge," 6 reels, s/h	
"Land without Music," 6 reels, new	
"The Green Pack," 5 reels, s/h	
"Fire has been Arranged," 6 reels.	
"She Shall Have Music," 6 reels, new	
"Silver Blaze," 6 reels, new	
"Southern Roses," 6 reels.	
"Across Europe," Jack Hylton, 2 reels, new	
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"A Corking Story," 1 reel, s/h	
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New 1 reels £4 2 0. New 6 reels £23 to £25.	
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16mm. Soundhead, complete with Optics, P.E.C., first quality components, designed for experimental machine, could be easily altered to fit silent machine	£25 0 0
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G.B. P.E.C., uncased type	£5 0 0
Bell Howell type P.E.C.	£5 0 0
Western 35mm. P.E.C. (large)	£2 0 0
S.P. speaker lead, 4 core	£3 5 0
S.P. Wundertone covers for machine and speaker (used)	£2 0 0

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Pathe Lux £30 model

Pathe 200B, partly converted for sound.

Pathe 200B Plus, late issue.

Specto transformer model.

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Pathe 17.5 Talkie, entirely rebuilt.

Pathe Vox 9.5, reconditioned, as new.

S.P. 16mm. Wundertone, special model with many improvements.

S.P. 16mm. Wundertone early model, but reconditioned as new.

Please note that as we have now applications for some of these machines we cannot say if they will remain unsold. Offers of good Projectors in part-exchange will be welcomed. Please give full description, price you expect, with a stamped addressed envelope for further details.

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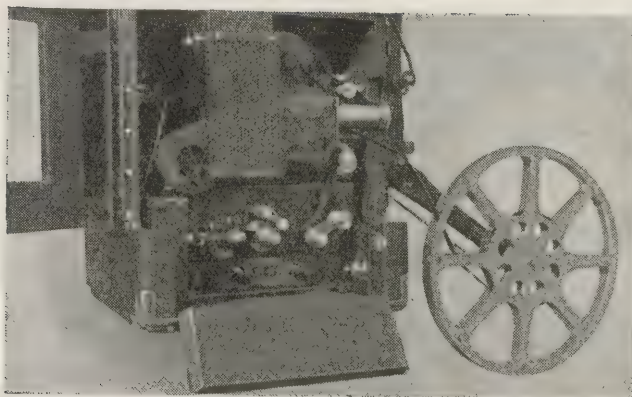


Fig. 1b. Ensign 16.50. Note soundhead layout, also cooling-fan and lamp-house.



Fig. 1c. Motor-Governor, power-pack and flywheel of Ensign 16.50. Note substantial spool-arms.

much poorer than in the others. (Using the same films and projector of course.) The offending hall is rather bare, and lath-and-plaster walls. Can you suggest how I might improve its acoustics?

A. Intelligibility of sound in any hall is mainly a matter of *reverberation time*. This is defined as the time taken for a sound to die away to one millionth of its original intensity. The delay is due to the sound being reflected from the interior surfaces of the hall, passing through the hall, striking other surfaces, and so on. The distances involved will obviously have an effect on this time, but the more important factor in the present case is the nature of the reflecting materials. A long reverberation time means that sounds will still be of audible loudness after they should have died out, and while succeeding sounds are being emitted from the speaker. Too-short

a time gives a "dead" effect. The sound is almost too clean-cut to sound natural. The reverberation time is reduced as the absorption of sound is increased and in a given size of auditorium is inversely proportional to the area of non-reflecting surface in it. The non-reflecting quality of any material is known as its *absorption coefficient*, in which scale unity is represented by a hole in the roof. That is an area which reflects no sound at all. (Since all sound reaching the hole passes out into infinite space and does not return.) At the other end of the scale would be a perfect reflector—and smooth plaster is a close approximation to this, with a coefficient of 0.02. In other words, only 2% of the sound striking its surface is absorbed, the other 98% is thrown back into the auditorium. It will be seen that it will take many reflections from such a surface to reduce the sound to inaudibility. Other materials commonly met, and arranged in order of absorptency, are flat wooden panel-

ling, hard wallboard, coarse fibreboard and curtains. "Average member of Audience" is one of the best absorbing mediums, with a coefficient of 0.82. (This is the explanation of the phenomenon which has puzzled more than one amateur. Tested before the show, his projector gives ample volume of sound, but when the actual performance begins the sound is mysteriously diminished. In a similar way, flutter and slight wow which are not evident in the empty hall become very obvious in the audience-deadened state.) In modern auditoriums seating is designed so that as nearly as possible the sound absorption of the empty seat is the same as that of an occupant—this helps to keep the acoustics constant regardless of the size of audience present.

From experimental findings, the optimum reverberation time—for a 500 c/s. note—is very close to one second. Slightly less

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46" x 35"	£2 4 0	£3 9 6
60" x 45"	£4 8 6	£5 18 6
72" x 54"	£5 17 6	£8 2 6
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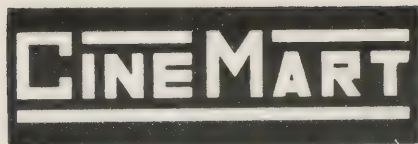
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for a small hall, and rather more for a large one. This gives the best sense of "presence." However, the amateur will rarely be in a position to work to exact figures, and in most cases his task is to cut the reverberation time as far as possible. This means providing enough absorbent material, such as curtains, carpets (in gangways especially), "acoustic board," padding on seats, etc. These are not easy to come by, and the amateur must exercise his ingenuity to find substitutes. For example, blankets and tarpaulins are usually available at Army camps, and are effective even if somewhat unsightly. Whatever "drapes" can be raked up should be hung over the walls, suspended from beams and laid over bare patches of floor. The wall at the back of the hall is particularly important. Since echo from this wall is often the main trouble, it is often worth fitting up some device so that the speaker can be suspended above the screen, and tilted down at the audience. (See later).

Other possible factors to be considered are resonances and dead spots. Resonances most usually involve only small surfaces or objects—such as door-panels or other non-rigid structures. Tightening up loose screws, or wedging paper between adjacent parts, is usually a complete cure. (If the speaker is in a carrying case, make sure that none of the fittings—handle, clips or locks—is loose, or capable of vibration. These are ideally situated to set up rattles which may be blamed on the speaker or amplifier.) Dead spots are less easy to detect, since they may only affect small areas of the auditorium. They may be due to peculiar echo effects, causing neutralisation of one sound-wave by another, but this is rare in any but the largest halls. The cure is to discover the surface responsible for the echo, and to cover this with sound-absorbing material. In smaller halls, dead spots are most commonly due to twin speakers—one on each side of the screen—not in correct phase. (See end of following item.) Dead spots—or rather areas of very poor sound—will also be found at the extreme sides of the hall, near the screen. Since these areas are also visually unsatisfactory, it is as well not to use them at all.

LOUDSPEAKERS

Some of the mechanisms in a sound-film projector are so finely adjusted and easily damaged, that one hesitates to suggest that the average amateur user should carry out his own modifications of them. The loud-speaker system, however, is one component which can usually be tackled with reasonable confidence, and without risk of losing original settings. Also, it is one which up to the

present has hardly received the attention it deserves from makers of substandard apparatus. Very often a marked improvement in reproduction can be obtained by relatively simple and inexpensive modifications. But before we discuss these, let us be quite clear on some elementary points, or misunderstandings may easily arise.

The function of a speaker is to convert variations in electrical current into variations in air-pressure. The electrical energy is most often made to produce movement of a coil suspended in a strong magnetic field. This movement has to be "coupled" with the air of the auditorium, and two main methods are used. The coil may be attached to a broad diaphragm, so that it cannot move without setting a considerable bulk of air in motion. (Or, since air is elastic, creating an area of high or low pressure in it. The distinction between "pressure" and "velocity" effects is an important one to sound engineers, but need not be discussed here.) This pressure wave spreads in all directions through the auditorium. The second method, which is more efficient, is to use a smaller diaphragm in conjunction with a horn so designed that the pressure wave is allowed to expand only in one direction—towards the audience. Furthermore, the rate of its expansion as it passes through the horn is regulated so that an unbroken "front" is preserved, and the area of the horn mouth represents the effective "engagement" with the air.

There are one or two points worth noting about the first, "cone," type of speaker: It dissipates as much energy backwards as it does towards the audience, and the rearward waves must be absorbed and/or prevented from mingling with the forward waves, otherwise they would weaken and distort the sound-wave reaching the listener. A "baffle" performs this function more or less effectively. Secondly, since the sound-wave leaving the cone expands in all directions, the ceiling, walls and floor of the auditorium are presented with as much of the sound as is the audience. Thirdly, although the power-handling ability of the cone may be increased by making it larger, there are definite mechanical limits of size. A larger cone means a greater weight of moving parts, which in turn means that it will be more

difficult to produce the very rapid oscillations required for the higher notes. The larger cone, too, cannot be made as stiff as a smaller one, and it has a tendency to ripple or buckle under the effect of these higher frequencies, so that while one part may be moving forward, another may be retreating. The resultant chaos in the formation of a wave-front may be imagined.

Compare these points with the horn-type speaker:— In this the rearward wave is almost negligible—the diaphragm is so small that it "engages" very little air, and hence dissipates a very small amount of power. The front surface of the diaphragm, however, is "loaded" by the horn, and will dissipate power in proportion to the area of the horn-mouth. The forward wave can be directed fairly accurately towards the audience, and less power is wasted on the building structures (to be reflected back and cause disturbing echoes). Since the actual diaphragm is small, it is easy to make it stiff and yet not heavy—the high notes will be more effectively dealt with. The net result is that a well-designed horn speaker is several times more efficient than a good cone-type instrument. An amplifier output of ten watts can almost deafen an audience of two thousand in a cinema with horn speakers, yet the same

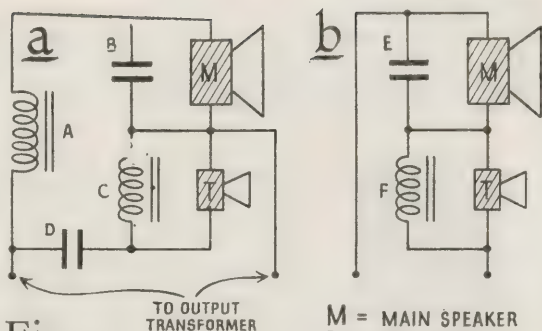


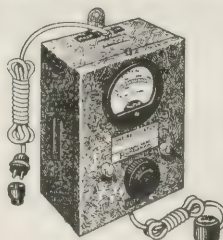
Fig. 2

OHMS	CORE	TURNS			M. FARADS		
		A	C	F	B	D	E
12 TO 15	IRON	45	35	40	9	6	8
	AIR	350	260	300			
4 TO 6	IRON	30	22	25	22	15	20
	AIR	230	175	200			

Fig. 2. Frequency-dividing filters. Alternative circuits and table of component values. (See text.)

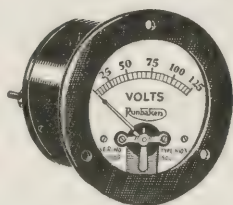
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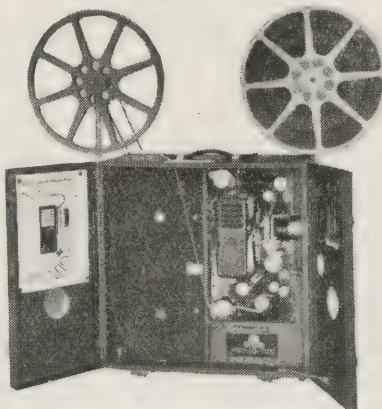
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power may be just enough to cover two hundred people when delivered through a portable cone-speaker. And there lies one very important factor—portability. To be effective, the horn type speaker has to be large—it may weigh a ton or more in a large cinema.

As a final theoretical consideration, the cone-type speaker falls down on the higher notes because of the actual speed of its diaphragm movement on loud low notes. Just as a train whistle sounds higher when approaching, and lower when retreating (the phenomenon explained by friend Doppler), so the pitch of a high note is quite noticeably varied when a low note is also being reproduced. The impression is similar to "flutter" from mechanical defects in the sound-head. This Doppler effect is much less evident with horn-speakers, as the actual movement of the diaphragm is smaller.

Summing up all these factors, it would seem that the horn-type speaker is capable of a very fine performance—but even so it is not considered satisfactory for the highest quality of reproduction. The lowest notes are sometimes handled by large cone-type speakers (which come into their own with bass notes) while the highest sounds are almost invariably reproduced by "tweeters." These are similar in construction to the main horns, but on a smaller scale, and with specially shaped horns. (The main horn would reproduce the high notes quite well, but tends to concentrate them into a narrow beam.) Such a complex and expensive arrangement is clearly out of the question for the amateur, even if bulkiness is no object, and fortunately it is not essential for our purposes. Many amateurs are quite satisfied with the sound from a single cone: if the audience is small, and the auditorium well "deadened" with furniture and hangings, the relative inefficiency and lack of direction may be overlooked. But something is lacking the "cleanness" and naturalness of the sound balance.

Practical Improvements

The simplest improvement which may be effected on the basic unit is the fitting of a "directional baffle," which is a short conical flare pointing to the centre of the audience. Usually it is made of heavy plywood— $\frac{1}{2}$ " or thicker—and it is fixed in front of the existing baffle or case. In section it may be either square or rectangular, to suit the disposition of the audience. It is rarely more than a foot long, and is shaped so that the mouth is about twice the diameter of the speaker-cone. This fitment can be very useful in halls with strong echoes, and need add little to the bulk of the equipment. The larger

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types, as used in public address equipment, are not always suitable for sound-film work, as unpleasant resonances are difficult to avoid, and give the sound a metallic quality.

But the higher notes fare little, if any, better with this arrangement, and a second speaker is still essential if improved realism of sound is desired. The professional horn-type moving-coil tweeters are ideal, but the better-made ones are expensive and scarce. The beam of sound which issues from a single horn is too narrow to give even distribution over the average shape of hall, and a multiple horn—composed of from six to twenty small units grouped radiating from the single diaphragm—is used. For our more modest-sized audiences, a small cone speaker usually makes quite a satisfactory tweeter. The improvement in quality and sparkle is due partly to a greater volume in the treble, and partly to absence of the interferences described above. The piezo-crystal type of tweeter is sometimes recommended, but does not seem to be so satisfactory for sound-film use as the moving-coil type—probably because its efficiency is greatest at frequencies above the limits of the sound-track. What is wanted is a unit which will handle effectively frequencies from about 1,500 to 8 or 9,000 cycles per second. The better types of 3, 4, or even 5 inch speaker will do this, although some midgets at present available are disappointingly insensitive. The improvement in high-note reproduction depends mainly upon the efficiency of the tweeter. With a first-class instrument the crispness is remarkable. If the tweeter is only fairly good, the tonal balance may seem to be unchanged, but even so the higher notes should be noticeably cleaner.

We now come to an essential part of any dual-speaker system—the frequency-dividing filter. Without this, the benefits are almost negligible. We have seen that high notes handled by the main speaker are mutilated in various ways, so it is obvious that they should be reserved for the tweeter. The lower frequencies, on the other hand, would easily overload the smaller unit—especially with outputs of 10 watts or more—and should not be allowed to reach it. The components of this filter must be selected to suit the speech-coil resistance of the speakers. The tweeter resistance should be the same as that of the main speaker, or a supplementary matching-transformer will be required. Most commonly the existing speaker will be either 5 ohms. or 12 to 15 ohms., and appropriate values are given in the table, Fig. 2. These are calculated to give a " crossover " frequency of 1,500 cycles, and do not entail any alteration to the existing output transformer. (2½ ohms. is a common figure for midget speakers,

and as an alternative to a matching transformer, two of these in series would make a very effective combination with a 5 ohm. main speaker.)

Circuit *a* is the form used widely in sound-film work, and the loss of power in the filter system is rarely enough to worry about. Arrangement *b* is simpler, but less efficient. It will give good results, but the loss of power will be more noticeable. However, a small drop in total volume is usually more than compensated for by greater clarity and naturalness. It will be seen that the condensers are of fairly large capacity—especially for the 4-6 ohm. system. Paper condensers are the correct type, and the required capacity can be made up by connecting units of lower value in parallel. (Use only reputable makes: some of the popular-priced articles are hopelessly inaccurate—little more than one half the marked value is often encountered.) Electrolytic types are not suitable, as they are both unreliable and inefficient in such a circuit. However, a passable substitute for the paper type may be improvised by joining a pair, each double the required capacity, negative to negative, and using the two positive leads as the terminals. Working voltage need not be more than 25 volts.

The chokes will have to be specially wound (See Sept. '44 issue for some general hints on coil-winding), and may be either iron or "air" cored. Iron-cored are preferable, since the fewer turns required mean less resistance in the windings, and hence a better filter action. The cores can be from burned-out or disused speaker transformers, and their size is not critical—a cross-section of from $\frac{1}{2}" \times \frac{1}{2}"$ to $\frac{3}{4}" \times \frac{1}{4}"$ will suit. (This may worry some mathematically inclined readers, who may doubt whether a choke of required inductance can be duplicated from such indefinite figures—but in actual practice the core size scarcely affects the action of the filters.) The windings should be made with gauge 22 enamelled wire, or a size or two thicker, and the core should be reassembled without any gap.

If iron cores are not available, wooden bobbins may be used. These can be made from medium-sized cotton-reels, and the "core" should be 1" in diameter by 1" long. Using gauge 24 wire the overall diameter will be between $1\frac{1}{4}"$ and $1\frac{3}{8}"$, depending on the number of turns. The wood, of course, has no magnetic properties, and is equivalent to an air core.

In addition to the foregoing suggestions, which are mainly concerned with improving the efficiency and frequency response of the speaker system, there is the matter of optimum placing of the units in the hall. This is found best by actual trial in any given

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case, but some very useful general observations are made in the T.I.D. Note "Effective Presentation." It is obvious that for the most realistic effects the speaker should be behind the screen, but as this entails the use of a porous screen, it is not often possible in substandard practice. Immediately above the screen is usually the best alternative, as the added height allows the speaker to be directed down towards the middle of the audience. This can give a more even distribution of sound than any lower placing. Another alternative is to have duplex speakers—one unit on each side of the screen. The effect is similar to a single speaker behind the screen, but the two units must be closely alike in sound-quality, or disturbing "wander" of the apparent source may result. The rearward sound from a baffle-type speaker—referred to earlier—can be a nuisance in small halls. It can be absorbed fairly effectively by placing some soft, thick hangings directly behind the speaker, or by lining the interior of the speaker case with cellulose wadding—applied thickly—or any other soft and bulky material.

Finally, a word about "phasing." Where more than one speaker is used, it is important that the sound-waves emitted by one should reinforce the other—not neutralise it. That is, the diaphragms should be in step. The easiest way to check this is to disconnect the speakers from the output transformer, and connect their speech-coil circuit momentarily across a flashlamp battery. Both (or all) diaphragms should jump in the same direction when the current is passed. If not, reverse the leads to one speaker.

Pathe H Soundhead

The photograph of a converted Patheoscope H, submitted by a reader and reproduced in the September, '44 issue, aroused much interest. We have been informed that the soundhead is the registered design of Messrs. Sidcup Cine Service. Although we knew that the actual workmanship was professionally carried out, we were not aware that the outfit was of proprietary design, otherwise credit would have been given. We trust that the above firm will forgive us for what may have appeared like an intentional slight.

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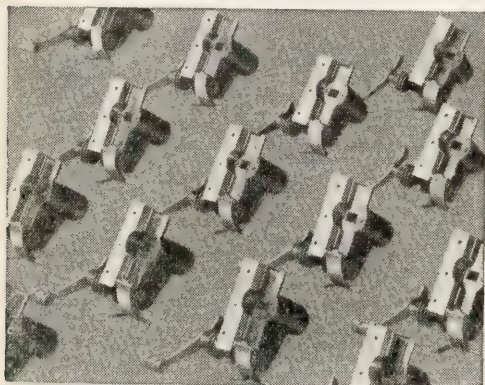
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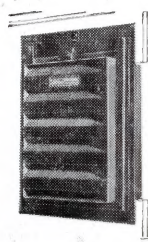
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